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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM ON BERLIN

Current Situation

On August 13 the East German authorities cut off all travel by East Germans and East Berliners to West Berlin except for persons issued special passes. The more than 50,000 East Berliners who worked in West Berlin were prohibited from continuing this employment. Large and well-armed East German military units were deployed in East Berlin to prevent violent public reaction to these moves, and the Soviets ringed the city with their troops.

These measures had the fundamental and long-range purposes of furthering the separation of East Berlin from West Berlin and the division generally of East Germany from West Germany; advancing thereby the consolidation of the East German "state"; and improving by a fait accompli the bargaining position of the Soviet Union in any negotiations with the West.

Since the taking of the initial measures, the East Germans have restricted the passage of West Berlin motor vehicles into East Berlin and have begun to harass Allied transit into East Berlin.

Western Reaction

The US, UK, and France have protested the Communist action through their Commandants in Berlin (August 14) and in notes directly to the Soviet Government (August 16). There is an intense feeling among the people of West Berlin, however, and to a lesser extent elsewhere in the West, that the Allied reaction has been too weak. In Berlin this feeling is heightened by an apparent growing arrogance and cockiness of the East Germans as their dramatic action met no strong Western response. The morale of West Berliners, which is absolutely vital to the maintenance of our position there, has dropped seriously, and confidence in the Allies seems to have been considerably shaken.

US Policy

We consider that this Communist act is an important move in the broader conflict between the free world and the Communist bloc, rather than an isolated local event. We believe, therefore, that we should deal with the move principally in the development of our overall policy for meeting the Soviet threat. This would involve principally stepping up the pace of our military preparations and exploiting this new Communist repression in our propaganda. In addition, however, we realize the great importance of West Berlin morale, and are taking steps to restore it. The visit of the Vice President to Berlin and the reinforcement of our garrison in the city are the principal measures to this end.

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Authority NSC 8-11-81 letter re: NLS 80-79

By isa, NARS, Date 2-9-82

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